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FOURTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 27 August 1990, at 3.25 p.m.

President: Mr. F. PERPIÑA-ROBERT (Spain)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 12) (continued)

Mr. NGOUBEYOU (Cameroon) said that the remarkable improvement in the international climate and the enhanced role of the United Nations should make it possible to realize the goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty: prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, reduction of nuclear weapons arsenals, and promotion of international co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, with due accoumt of the needs of the developing countries that were States Parties to the Treaty.

The NPT continued to serve as the corner-stone for the international non-proliferation régime, the Treaty having played a vital role over the past 20 years in reducing the risk of nuclear war, thereby making an invaluable contribution to international stability and world peace. The arms race, whether nuclear or conventional, was particularly destabilizing for developing countries, whose main concern was to improve the living conditions of their populations. To achieve that aim, peace must reign, and disputes must be settled by peaceful means. The arms race made such efforts more difficult, diverting for military uses valuable resources that could have been used for development.

Nuclear disarmament was an essential element in any serious steps to bring about national, regional or international security and development, for which reason, Cameroon had always been a staunch supporter of the Treaty, which, on the whole, had functioned well. The total number of States Parties had grown, and for the first time, two nuclear-weapon non-party States were attending the Conference as observers. It was to be hoped that the present Review Conference would take concrete measures to enhance the Treaty's work and that other States would accede to it in the future.

Despite the major progress made in reducing stategic nuclear arsenals, the Conference still had important work before it. It must take a stance on the discriminatory aspects and imbalances contained in the Treaty, particularly with regard to the commitments made by the depositaries on the one hand and the non-nuclear-weapon States on the other. It must also increase its efforts to ensure that States Parties fully met their obligations under the Treaty. Again, concrete measures must be identified to help to achieve the goal of complete disarmament and a nuclear test ban, as well as to enhance international co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

His delegation welcomed the statements made by the nuclear-weapon States Parties that they had scrupulously fulfilled their obligations under article I of the Treaty. No overt case of nuclear-weapon proliferation had been noted since the Third Conference. Yet the growth of the nuclear capability of a number of States that, for the most part, were not States Parties to the Treaty gave cause for concern, as did the alarming rate at which nuclear arsenals were being modernized. The Conference must give careful consideration to developments that might be inconsistent with the obligations under articles I and II of the Treaty.

The IAEA safeguards system provided for in article III had worked satisfactorily since the previous Review Conference. It should be noted that on 30 June 1990, safeguard agreements had been in force for 85 of the 136 non-nuclear-weapon States Parties (NPT/CONF.IV/12, para. 10) and that no diversion of a significant amount of safeguarded nuclear material had been detected (NPT/CONF.IV/12, para. 6). His delegation hoped that the Conference would give due consideration to the problems encountered by the Agency in further increasing the efficiency of a system that had long proved its worth.

With regard to article IV, the energy requirements of developing countries had not diminished since the Third Review Conference. Non-nuclear-weapon States were therefore entitled to expect greater co-operation in the field of much-needed applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It was to be hoped that the non-aligned countries' proposals in that regard would be favourably received, especially in view of the failure of the PUNE Conference of 1987 to achieve satisfactory results. Concern with non-proliferation should not serve as a pretext for preventing countries from acquiring or developing peaceful nuclear techniques or for imposing conditions incompatible with the sovereign rights and independence of States. It was essential that the Treaty's three objectives of prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons, promotion of co-operation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, especially for the benefit of developing non-nuclear-weapon States Parties, and general and complete disarmament should be pursued simultaneously and in good faith by all of the Parties. His delegation therefore hoped that the nuclear States Parties to the Treaty as well as other Parties capable of doing so would undertake to increase their technical and financial assistance, bilaterally or through the IAEA or other suitable international mechanisms, with a view to enabling developing States Parties to

derive more of the benefits envisaged under article V. In view of the potential risk to human life and the environment, and bearing in mind the principle of non-use of force in international relations embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, it was also essential that peaceful nuclear installations should be given suitable protection.

It was a matter of concern that, despite some significant developments such as the signing of the INF Treaty, the joint declaration on non-proliferation by the United States and the Soviet Union and the adoption of verification protocols at the recent Washington Summit, as well as significant progress achieved at the Vienna and Stockholm talks, the undertakings set out in article VI had not been fully discharged during the period under review. The problem of the cessation of all test explosions of nuclear weapons, like that of the conclusion of a treaty on general and complete disarmament, remained unresolved. He continued to believe that the conclusion of an agreement on the complete halting of nuclear tests was an essential condition for compliance with article VI, and also supported the Nigerian proposal on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the Treaty (NPT/CONF.IV/17). It was also to be hoped that the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban re-established by the Conference on Disarmament would accelerate its work with a view to arriving at an early agreement which, together with measures prohibiting the threat or use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States Parties, would unquestionably contribute towards strengthening the NPT in particular and the non-proliferation régime in general, encouraging States which had not yet done so to accede to the Treaty and restoring the confidence of non-nuclear-weapon States Parties.

Lastly, stressing the major importance of the provisions of article VII, to many developing non-nuclear-weapon States Parties, he noted that in 1964, well before the NPT had been drafted, the African States had adopted a declaration on the denuclearization of their continent. Unfortunately, the entry into force of that declaration was still prevented by the attitude of South Africa, which had gradually acquired an alarming military nuclear capacity. His delegation welcomed the consensus reached on that issue within the Disarmament Commission, which would undoubtedly assist the General Assembly in adopting a set of measures guaranteeing respect for the Declaration.

Ms. SINEGIORGIS (Ethiopia), emphasizing the importance her delegation attached to the Conference, welcomed all observer States, in particular France and the People's Republic of China, and expressed satisfaction at the numerous accessions to the Treaty since the Third Review Conference of 1985. In the 20 years since its coming into force, the NPT had not only attracted a larger number of accessions than any other arms control treaty but had also achieved considerable success in averting horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond the five States which had possessed such weapons at the time the Treaty was signed, in 1968. The present Review Conference was the last opportunity to assess the implementation of the Treaty before a decision on extending it was taken in 1995.

The Conference was taking place at a particularly significant point in history, when the ending of the cold war gave rise to hopes that international peace and security might be achieved through disarmament rather than through confrontation and a hazardous recourse to armaments and the arms race. The dramatic changes in the international political climate which had occurred since the Third Review Conference had eased international tensions and brought about important developments in disarmament and confidence-building. In particular, the signature and implementation by the United States and the USSR of the INF Treaty could be considered a watershed marking the beginning of a new trend in disarmament. The two super-Powers were also to be commended for the steps they were taking towards the eagerly awaited conclusion of a START agreement. However, the significance of those two agreements should not be over-emphasized, since they were intended to eliminate only a very small proportion of the total number of nuclear weapons possessed by the super-Powers. Like many other participants in the Conference, Ethiopia considered that the trends in the arms race had not yet been reversed and that the current favourable international atmosphere should serve as a spur to further significant progress in the fulfilment of commitments entered into under the terms of the Treaty.

When the NPT had been opened for signature more than 20 years previously, Ethiopia had been one of the first signatory States, not only because the Treaty imposed a legal barrier against the further spread of nuclear weapons but also because it was expected to promote progress in nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament. Regrettably, the ultimate goal of achieving nuclear disarmament still seemed very remote today and the threat of nuclear

catastrophe still loomed over the planet. Adherence to the Treaty was still far from universal; not all nuclear-weapon-States were Parties, and it was an open secret that a number of countries, having acquired the necessary materials and technological know-how, now had the capacity to develop nuclear weapons. The nuclear capability ambitions of certain States were a serious impediment to endeavours within the framework of the Treaty. If the present trend towards the non-application of safeguards in the transfer of materials which could be utilized for the production of nuclear weapons was allowed to continue, the NPT régime would be further weakened and eroded.

With the relaxation of international tensions and the ending of the cold war, the continuance of the arms race had become an anomaly. The nuclear-weapon States should grasp the opportunity offered them by the prevailing favourable political climate by discharging as fully as possible their obligations under the Treaty. A particularly timely and significant step would be the conclusion of an effective, verifiable and comprehensive test ban treaty, which would not only strengthen the NPT régime but would also provide some States with an incentive to accede to the Treaty. In that connection, it was gratifying to note that, after an interval of 7 years, the Conference on Disarmament had re-established the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, which had already made a good start on its work. Her delegation appealed to all nuclear-weapon States to conclude a comprehensive test ban treaty as soon as possible.

Every effort should also be made to conclude an agreement of a legal and binding character on negative security assurances for States which had renounced the possession of nuclear weapons or the stationing of such weapons in their territory. Nigeria's proposal on that issue (NCB/CONF.IV/17) was timely and, in the present improved international atmosphere, deserved a positive response.

As to the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, Ethiopia had always supported efforts aimed at establishing them; in 1964, it had been among the countries which had taken the initiative leading to the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa by the Organization of African Unity, and had worked ever since towards the Declaration's implementation. It was indeed regrettable that continued calls by the General Assembly and other forums to declare Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone remained unheeded. The wishes and

decisions of non-nuclear-weapon States to keep their respective regions free from nuclear weapons should be encouraged, respected and reciprocated by positive action on the part of the nuclear-weapon States.

Mr. RIVAS (Colombia) said that the Conference was meeting in particularly complex circumstances which had both a positive and a negative side to them as far as international peace and security were concerned. Ideological détente, rapprochement between the two super-Powers and the rapid changes in Eastern European were taking place at a time of recrudescence of regional tension, ethnic confrontation and a relative deterioration in the standard of living of more than three quarters of mankind. The background was one still dominated by an arms race that was unlimited as far as conventional weapons were concerned and, despite some successes in regard to nuclear weapons, an undeniable increase in the danger of horizontal proliferation, regardless of international commitments to the contrary. There was clear consensus on the virtues of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and on the positive results achieved in the 20 years it had been in force. The Treaty had sought to prevent unrestricted proliferation of nuclear weapons, pointing a finger at those who had fraudulently violated its provisions; it had succeeded in establishing what was, on the whole, a serious and useful system of verification.

None the less, while international opinion recognized the merits of the Treaty, it was also convinced that the NPT needed to be strengthened and complemented in some areas. Compliance was called for on the part of both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States. Articles I and II should not be circumvented in any way and should cover not only nuclear weapons and explosives as such but also those elements inextricably linked with the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

The verification system established in article III of the Treaty should be made universal so that safeguards could be extended to all components essential for the use of nuclear energy, including those intended for peaceful uses, and should be extended to all States, which benefited from the transfer of technology or of nuclear materials. The limitations which hampered the work at the IAEA - lack of resources and lack of international commitment - must disappear to give rise to a less discriminatory system and provide greater security for the cause of peace and security.

The principle set out in article IV of the Treaty should be supplemented by a policy to make it possible in practice to achieve the objectives of developing research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Developing countries in particular faced great difficulty in enjoying the benefits of nuclear scientific and technological achievements. Such countries as had endorsed the Treaty and were fulfilling their obligations should not be prejudiced by the type of co-operation that some nuclear States provided to non-party States, in clear violation of their legal obligations. In that respect, his delegation endorsed the statement made to the Review Conference by the spokesmen for the Non-Aligned States and other States Parties not forming part of the Western and Eastern European groups.

The Conference afforded an exceptional opportunity for nuclear powers to strengthen their commitment under article VI. Important, albeit partial, steps had been taken on the road to nuclear disarmament, or rather to a lower rate of nuclear armament. There was no doubt, however, that international opinion and the aspirations of all peoples continued to be in favour of bolder and more ambitious measures in that field. It was not enough for the two super-Powers to agree on certain limitations to their nuclear arsenals while leaving their destructive capacity intact, if nuclear-weapon States continued the race towards technical improvement of their weapons of mass destruction and a vertical proliferation which continued to threaten mankind, something that was against the very spirit of the Treaty.

Article VI fundamentally concerned the nuclear-weapon and potential nuclear-weapon States. It was difficult to imagine any serious attempt at nuclear disarmament that did not involve a ban on nuclear weapons testing. For that reason, there was increasing support for a total ban treaty to complement the partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963. His delegation, while not having called for the Amendment Conference for the Partial Test Ban Treaty, none the less recognized the importance of such a Conference.

One aspect of overwhelming importance was that of assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. Throughout the period of negotiation of the Treaty, the concern of those States at being exposed to a situation in which nuclear-weapon States were not subject to any binding commitment not to use such weapons had been evident and had been reflected in the attitude of nuclear-weapon States parties, which had sponsored the agreement resulting in 1968 in the adoption of Security Council resolution 255. However, that

"positive" assurance had never been considered sufficient by the non-nuclear-weapon States, even when strengthened by later declarations by States Parties and other States. The reasons for such dissatisfaction were clearly outlined in the document presented by Nigeria (NPT/CONF.IV/17). The Colombian delegation therefore considered that the time had come to embark on negotiations to provide sufficient guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States that nuclear weapons would not be used against them. Such negative assurances deserved to be given careful consideration so that they might be refined and enriched by the international community for the purposes of complementing the non-proliferation system and making it truly universal.

To achieve universality and to secure the spirit in which the Treaty had been negotiated, efforts must be undertaken to ensure that nuclear-weapon States, and non-nuclear-weapon States that were not yet parties acceded to the Treaty as soon as possible. The difficulties encountered by many States in relation to the Treaty should be resolved in the interests of the cause of world peace. While it would be difficult under present circumstances to amend the text of the Treaty itself, it was possible and desirable to improve and complement its provisions by means of additional agreements, preferably on a multilateral basis, covering aspects essential to the non-proliferation system and nuclear disarmament.

Such interest in strengthening, making up the shortcomings and extending the scope of the Treaty did not, however, mean that it must be considered as the only possible system to avoid proliferation of nuclear weapons and arrive at nuclear disarmament. Regional instruments, the most significant being the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga, provided a valuable means of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which had preceded the Non-Proliferation Treaty, did not cover the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Cuba not having acceded to it. It was unnecessarily weakened and the force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty itself was prejudiced as a result. His country was pleased to note the efforts being made by some countries in Latin America to amend provisions of the Treaty of Tlatelolco that were preventing other countries from becoming parties to it. The Treaty also had the merit of compelling nuclear Powers to respect the denuclearization commitment of the States Parties and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against those States, thereby establishing the negative assurance that was lacking in the

Non-Proliferation Treaty. In that respect, the efforts of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to achieve the universality of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and monitor compliance with the relevant obligations were welcome; document NPT/CONF.IV/15 from that body was an important contribution to the present Review Conference.

In view of the obligation for States Parties to decide in 1995 whether the Non-Proliferation Treaty should be extended indefinitely or for a given period, in accordance with article X, paragraph 2, of the Treaty, it was necessary to define clearly the characteristics of the future Conference and the opportunities it offered. It was important to determine whether only the matter of extending the Treaty was to be discussed or whether the question of a review might also be included. In that respect, the work of the Preparatory Committee would be followed with interest. His delegation hoped that the wealth of material obtained from the four Review Conferences held so far would be duly utilized at the 1995 meeting.

Colombia, as a non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, considered that the present Conference should, on the basis of the statements made by participating countries and particularly the statements made on behalf of nuclear-weapon States, reaffirm the validity and usefulness of the Treaty. At the same time, it was necessary to go further and ease the way for those States which had not completely fulfilled their obligations to do so in the future. It must not be forgotten that nuclear disarmament, as an essential complement to non-proliferation, was only one stage in mankind's long-term objective, which was general and complete disarmament. Such a goal was fundamental to the Treaty, and indeed was specified in article VI. His country continued to hope that the text of that article would not remain a dead letter but would become a reality and would guarantee mankind the future to which it was entitled.

Mr. RIVADENEIRA (Ecuador) said that the international community must undertake major efforts to banish the true causes of confrontations between nations by seeking equitable solutions to enormous past injustices and reducing the glaring disparities between rich and poor countries. Only then could the world live in peace and harmony. If backwardness, hunger and disease and the crushing external debt of the developing countries were eliminated, the spectre of nuclear war would fade, particularly now, when the East-West struggle had considerably declined.

His delegation supported the point of view of the Non-Aligned Countries, particularly with regard to the halting of nuclear tests; Ecuador, with its coastline on the Pacific Ocean, was deeply concerned that testing continued despite repeated international protest. His Government also deemed it extremely important to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by the developing countries.

His delegation underscored the importance of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and of the Non-Proliferation Treaty: Ecuador actively supported those two instruments and was prepared to work towards greater implementation and an extension of the TNP. It was to be hoped that the steps needed to improve the effectiveness of the Treaty of Tlatelolco would be taken without delay and he fully endorsed the memorandum submitted by General Secretariat of OPANAL (NPT/CONF.IV/15).

Since the Third Review Conference, a new denuclearized zone had been created in 1986 under the Treaty of Rarotonga, a landmark on the road to the denuclearization of the planet. Hopefully, other nuclear-weapon-free zones would be established, preferably in regions that had been focal points of international conflict and tension. It was also important for the various international forums on disarmament, for example the Conference on Disarmament, the Fourth Review Conference itself and those meetings that examined the problems of other types of weapons of mass destruction or the use of the marine environment and outer space, to co-ordinate their work and exchange information so as to arrive at allied general solutions. Equally crucial was the need to control the production and sale of conventional weapons, which, in the long run, could prove to be just as cruel and devastating. One major shortcoming of the NPT was its absence of universality, and the Conference should therefore reiterate its appeal to all nuclear-weapon States and to non-nuclear-weapon States, especially threshold States, to accede to the Treaty. Without their participation, the NPT would never achieve the objective of general and complete disarmament.

Ecuador was deeply concerned that it was possible to avoid complying with the obligation under article I of the Treaty not to transfer nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to non-party States, that had begun development of nuclear programmes without being subject to the Treaty's restrictions. It was incomprehensible that military assistance could be provided to countries known to be experimenting with vectors for nuclear warheads.

According to the data provided by the IAEA, few nuclear facilities in the States Parties to the Treaty were not subject to the safeguards régime. His Government wondered, however, how useful those safeguards could be if both nuclear-weapon States and threshold States refused to accept them. The Agency should be commended for its efforts in implementing safeguards and working towards the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, but much remained to be done. The technical assistance resources offered by the IAEA to help developing countries acquire nuclear energy sources - in support of their economic and social development - continued to be scarce. Thus, there was an inexplicable imbalance in the importance that the Agency's main contributors attached to article III and to article IV of the Treaty. The granting of resources for IAEA's verification work should in no case be to the detriment of technical assistance for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

While he welcomed the efforts made by the nuclear-weapon States to comply with article VI of the Treaty, it was important to make further progress in negotiations on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race. The exceptionally favourable international situation must be used to convert the Partial Test Ban Treaty into an instrument banning all nuclear testing, the long-term goal being complete disarmament.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.